Influence of media and socialisation agents on healthy eating among Australian Gen Y

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Presentation outline

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Introduction to the research problem

If weight gain continues at current levels, by 2025, close to 80% of all Australian adults will be overweight or obese.

Fourteen million Australians are overweight or obese.

Overweight and obesity is the second highest contributor to the burden of diseases.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the Australian population aged 18 and above are overweight or obese (ABS, 2013).

Change in obesity-related behaviour of Australian young adults is vital.
Research scope

- Political environment
- Physical environment
- Societal environment
- Social environment
- Individual factors
- Behavior

Research scope
Research objectives

- To examine the direct effect of media on young adults’ healthy eating behaviour.
- To examine media influences on young adults’ perceptions of two important socialisation agents, i.e. parents and peers.
- To examine the influence of parental and peer norms on self-efficacy.
- To examine the effect of self-efficacy on young adults’ attitudes towards healthy eating.
- To determine how attitude contributes to young adults’ adoption of a healthy diet.
Societal determinant: The effects of media

- **Direct effect**

  ![Diagram showing direct effect]

  - Media
  - Healthy eating

- **Indirect effect**

  ![Diagram showing indirect effect]

  - Media → Mediators (social norms, self-efficacy, and attitude) → Healthy eating

**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework illustrating the direct and indirect effect of media on healthy eating of Australian young adults.
Social determinants: Parental and peer norms

According to social norm theory (Cialdini et al., 1990):

- **Descriptive norms**
  Perceived prevalence of behaviour among others.

- **Injunctive norms**
  Perceived approval of behaviour by others.

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Parental & Peer norms → Self-efficacy towards healthy eating
Individual determinants: The effects of self-efficacy and attitude

- **Self-efficacy toward healthy eating** refers to an individual’s perceived ability to eat healthily, despite potential barriers.

- **Attitude**
  - *Affective* refers to individuals’ emotional reaction to a particular behaviour.
  - *Cognitive* refers to beliefs about the outcomes of performing that behaviour.
Conceptual framework and Research hypotheses

Figure 2. Conceptual framework illustrating the direct and indirect effect of societal, social, and individual factors on healthy eating of Australian young adults.
Research methods

Participants
Sampling frame: Australian young adults aged 18-34 years (gen Y) who were born between 1981 and 1997.
Total sample size: 650 respondents

Measures
All the items of the survey instrument were adapted from previously published scales.

Procedures
- Questionnaire was designed and developed using the Qualtrics platform.
- The survey instrument and processes were pre-tested with a convenience sample of 10 persons.
- An international market research agency was then employed to collect data from its online consumer panels in Australia.
- After an initial data screening, 650 respondents were accepted for further analysis.
Findings

• Exposure to healthy eating messages have a significant effect on perceived peer norms. However, it does not have a significant influence on perceived parental norms.
• Parental and peer norms have a positive association with self-efficacy towards healthy eating.
• Self-efficacy is positively associated with affective attitude and cognitive attitude.
• Affective attitude is positively associated with healthy eating. However, cognitive attitude does not have a significant influence on healthy eating.
• Exposure to healthy eating media messages does not have a direct significant effect on healthy eating.
### Findings

#### Societal Factors
- Media exposure to pro-healthy eating messages
- Perceived Parental Influences
  - Parental norms
- Perceived Peer Influences
  - Peer norms

#### Social Factors
- Parental norms
- Peer norms

#### Individual Factors
- Self-efficacy
  - Affective attitude
  - Cognitive attitude
- Healthy eating

### Table 1. Result of hypotheses testing for healthy eating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t-value (C.R.)</th>
<th>Hypotheses testing result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to media</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.970***</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to media</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>3.252***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental norms</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>5.290***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer norms</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>3.517***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>10.101***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective attitude</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>6.707***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive attitude</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>4.662***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to media</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>1.751*</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to media</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.230*</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>6.686***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes:
- β = standardised regression coefficient of path relationship.
- *** = P < .001,
- ** = P < .01,
- * = P < .05,
- ns = Not significant.
Practical implications

- Indirect media influences should be considered when it comes to changing healthy eating behaviour among gen Y. As peers and parents are the most influential referent groups, campaign messages should emphasise peer and parental prevalence and approval of healthy eating.

- Two distinct types of social norms including injunctive and descriptive norms must be considered when designing the media messages.

- An effective health intervention would accelerate self-efficacy towards healthy eating which will result in increased rate of healthy diet adoption among young adults.

- Increase the effectiveness of the prosocial health campaigns by emphasising on positive emotional consequences of healthy eating (affective attitude).

- It is important to note that encouraging cognitive aspect of healthy eating does not necessarily lead to increased level of healthy eating.
Limitations and future research

Limitations

- Cross-sectional study.
- Used general measure of self-reported exposure to healthy eating messages.
- Limited ability to extrapolate and generalise the results to other health-related behaviours or other populations.

Future research

Future studies could:

- Use this model to investigate other healthy lifestyle behaviours.
- Investigate whether these proposed relationships stand up to scrutiny in other populations or in different age groups such as baby boomers, generation x, generation z, and generation alpha.
- Utilise panel data to clarify the causality.
Thank you.